

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 MCT-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02
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R 070959Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY DACCA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9645
INFO AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 1600
AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 3618

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, BG
SUBJ: OSMANI CHARGES POLLING IRREGULARITIES

SUMMARY: AT A PRESS CONFERENCE JUNE 6, GENERAL OSMANI CHARGED THAT THERE HAD BEEN NUMEROUS IRREGULARITIES DURING THE VOTING IN THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION JUNE 3. DESPITE CALLING THE ELECTION UNFAIR, OSMANI SAID HE DID NOT WANT A NEW ELECTION AND THAT NEITHER HE NOR THE PARTIES WHICH HAD SUPPORTED HIM WOULD LAUNCH "ANY EXTRA-CONSTITUTIONAL MOVEMENT ON THE ISSUE". THE INDIVIDUAL PARTIES OF THE GOJ FRONT WILL DECIDE SEPARATELY THEIR COURSE OF ACTION FOR THE DECEMBER PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS. ELECTION SECRETARY SAID THAT HE WAS "REASONABLY SATISFIED" WITH THE CONDUCT OF THE VOTING, ALTHOUGH SOME SLIPUPS OCCURRED. A PRESIDENTIAL ADVISER THOUGHT THERE MIGHT HAVE BEEN SOME "OVER ZEALOUSNESS" ON BOTH SIDES. THE ADVISER ALSO
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COMMENTED ON THE "NEGATIVE VOTE" ASPECT OF THE ELECTION.
END SUMMARY.

1. IN HIS JUNE 6 PRESS CONFERENCE, OSMANI MADE A SERIES OF ALLEGATIONS OF VOTING IRREGULARITIES. HE SAID THAT FIVE LOCAL LEADERS OF THE GOJ FRONT WERE KILLED DURING THE CAMPAIGN AND THAT OTHERS WERE KIDNAPPED, THREATENED

OR BEATEN. DURING THE POLLING ITSELF, OSMANI SAID THERE WERE REPORTS OF "WIDESPREAD" MALPRACTICE, BUT THE COMPLAINTS WENT UNHEEDED AND THAT HIS POLLING AGENTS WERE IN MANY CASES HELPLESS TO PREVENT SUCH IRREGULARITIES AS BALLOT STUFFING FOR ZIA DURING THE LAST HOURS OF THE POLLING. OSMANI SAID ALSO THAT ON THE EVENING OF JUNE 2 ARMED GROUPS HAD THREATENED THE LIVES OF MANY OF HIS POLLING AGENTS, WHO STAYED AWAY FROM THE POLLING BOOTHS THE NEXT DAY. THREATS ALSO WERE MADE TO THE HINDU COMMUNITY TO VOTE FOR ZIA, OSMANI CHARGED.

2. DESPITE HIS ALLEGATIONS, OSMANI SAID HE DID NOT WANT A FRESH ELECTION AND WOULD NOT START ANY AGITATION ON THE ISSUE. HE APPEALED TO THE PEOPLE "IRRESPECTIVE OF THEIR POLITICAL AFFILIATIONS" TO BE CALM, TOLERANT AND TO SUPPORT THE RESTORATION OF "PEOPLE'S RIGHTS AND THE RULE OF LAW". OSMANI REFUSED TO LABEL THE ELECTION RIGGED AND WHEN PRODDED BY REPORTERS, HE REPLIED "PLEASE DON'T PUT WORDS IN MY MOUTH. I AM NOT GOING TO ADD ANY MORE ADJECTIVE OR INVECTIVE TO WHAT I HAVE ALREADY SAID." HE SEEMED ALSO TO REFER TO THE CLIMATE OF THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN AS UNFAIR AT LEAST AS MUCH AS THE ACTUAL POLLING.

3. OSMANI USED THE PRESS CONFERENCE ONCE AGAIN TO CALL FOR REPEAL OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES REGULATION AND THE EMERGENCY POWER RULES, RELEASE OF ALL POLITICAL PRI-CONFIDENTIAL

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SONERS, WITHDRAWAL OF MARTIAL LAW AND THE RETURN OF PRESS FREEDOMS.

4. IN ANSWER TO A QUESTION ON HIS POLITICAL PLANS, OSMANI SAID HIS PARTY, THE JATIYA JANATA PARTY, AND THE OTHER PARTIES OF THE FRONT WOULD DECIDE SEPARATELY THEIR COURSE OF ACTION FOR THE DECEMBER PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION.

5. POLCOUNSELOR MET ELECTION COMMISSION SECRETARY QAZI JALALUDDIN AHMED AND PRESIDENTIAL ADVISER (MINISTER) FOR SHIPPING CAPTAIN NURUL HAQ THE EVENING OF JUNE 6. JALAL SAID HE WAS "REASONABLY SATISFIED" WITH THE CONDUCT OF THE POLLING ITSELF (HE DID NOT COMMENT ON THE CLIMATE IN WHICH THE ELECTION TOOK PLACE). HE SAID ONE PRESIDING OFFICER HAD BEEN SUSPENDED AND HIS CASE WAS BEING LOOKED INTO. JALA ADDED THAT HE KNEW THAT THE RULES HAD NOT BEEN FOLLOWED IN EVERY POLLING PLACE; IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO KEEP AN EYE ON MORE THAN 21,000; BUT HE THOUGHT THAT IRREGULARITIES WERE MINIMAL IN THE LOCAL CONTEXT.

6. NURUL HAQ SAID THAT IN HIS TRAVELS ON JUNE 3 HE,

LIKE OTHERS, HAD NOTED THE PEACEFUL POLLING AND A TURN-OUT LOWER THAN EXPECTED (ZIA'S FORCES HAD HOPED FOR 60-70 PERCENT) AND HAD SEEN SOME EXERCISE OF "OVER ZEALOUSNESS" ON BOTH SIDES. ON THE OSMANI SIDE, HE CLAIMED THAT IN ONE POLLING STATION IN AN AREA PREDOMINANTLY HINDU, ZIA SUPPORTERS WERE HINDERED IN CASTING VOTES. BOTH HAQ AND ALAL EXPRESSED SOME SURPRISE AT THE RESULTS FROM BOGRA WHERE THE TURNOUT WAS MUCH HIGHER THAN IN 1970.

7. HAQ SAID THE VOTE WAS NOT SO MUCH ONE FOR ZIA BUT ONE AGAINST THE AWAMI LEAGUE. ZIA HAD MADE THE BAKSAL ISSUE THE KEYNOTE OF THE ELECTION AND THIS HAD PAID OFF. HAQ ADDED THAT "WE BENGALIS ALWAYS VOTE AGAINST SOMETHING AND NEVER FOR". HAQ'S COMMENT WAS THAT THE PEOPLE

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HAD CLEARLY REJECTED THE TURMOIL OF THE MUJIB PERIOD AND THEREBY SUPPORTED, ALBEIT BY INDIRECTION, THE STABILITY AND LAW AND ORDER REPRESENTED BY ZIA.

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Message Attributes

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